How to Create Community Partnerships for Successful Programs

- Assess what programs exist in your agency and in your community

- Gather data & statistics to support need for programs

- Build coalitions around issues

- Foster evolution of culture in agencies and in communities

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Background notes from discussion sessions:

The problem/issue:

- Funding and support for partners – holding up our end with less funding
    - Uneven numbers of partners
    - Creative uses for partners, new ideas
    - Staff needs to work with partners and understand the use and need for partners
    - Prioritization of resources
    - Funds are contingent on co-operation and collaboration
    - When funding gets cut and staff is cut, we pull inward and don't use partnerships

- Identify targets (both in community and in agencies)
    - Lack of knowledge - who to contact in an agency, who to contact in the community
    - Who/where are the communities we need to work with?
    - Be proactive to reach groups

- Identify goals and issues
    - (IOTA) Information Opportunity Transportation & Access
    - Realistic goals (not goals doomed to failure)
    - Do the community goals mesh with yours?
    - Do the agency goals mesh with the community?
    - Make sure your goals are theirs – common ground
    - Be willing to say 'this is not our goal,' then share the project with others
    - Help manager understand these goals are also their goals, these communities are also their communities
    - Agree on common interests and learn to take disparate interests into account

- Attitude
    - Move out of 'comfort zone'
    - Get involved!

- Past experiences may have soured community
    - Barrier of the 'institutional face'
    - Credibility or lack of credibility in the community

- Bureaucratic inertia
  - 'What's in it for me' attitude
  - Bureaucratic need to make it work perfectly – 'you can be just like us'
  - Lack of time and money
  - Competing interests
  - Commitment from management to sustaining programs and finishing projects
  - Changing mindset to be open to involvement
  - Skepticism
  - Pessimists

- Finding and training stewardship partners
  - Who takes the lead in partnerships?
  - Capacity for leadership
  - Accountability and responsibility
  - Special interest groups that take over

Resources Needed:

- Directory of resources/sources/partnerships
- Define what you need/want from a partner
- "The Toolbox" available through Forest Service Nature Watch
- "Toolbox for the Great Outdoors"
- Internal networking

Actions:

- Research community before you start project – know your community
  - Do an assessment of what is in your agency and communities already – coordinate those links [this would be a good student project]
  - Contact people in their contact areas – churches, community centers, etc.
  - Need new data on today's communities – social science data [good student project]

- Provide skills partners can use back at their home spaces

- Reconcile definitions
  - Partnership
  - Community
  - Community outreach
  - What a park is and how the different agencies provide parks

- Find commonality
  - Identify issues
  - Link partners
  - Build coalitions around issues
  - Break it down to the appropriate level of understanding

- Develop a web calendar to identify events

- Image
  - Connect with the families and children – the next generation
  - Brand yourself in communities so you are not 'negative'
  - Relevance to now and knowledge base of community- identify icons they relate to: i.e. beach, Yosemite, sequoias

- Link urban greenways with national forests and lands [Augustus Hawkins Park model]

- Agencies need to be focused on goals and needs
  - Incorporate existing programs into new goals
  - Institutionalize the partnership process
  - Organize groups that are working for the same goals/on the same path
  - Identify leaders/movers inside the agency and the community
    - Educate managers
    - Sell them on the project
    - What is their interest?
    - Get buy in from the top down and the bottom up

- Provide ready-made visions for management buy in
  - Have statistics to support bottom line
  - Know who your boss listens to and get them on 'your side'
  - Gather research and data to support your idea

- Good partnership skills
  - Realize the partners may not agree with your ideas – be flexible
  - Be honest with your partner and vice versa
  - Where you can't come together, bring in another partner to handle that area
  - Agree to disagree
  - Be respectful of needs, differences and time lines
  - Admit errors and move on
  - Agree on ground rules
  - Share leads, constituents and contractors

- o Priority from the top down in an agency – partnerships need legitimacy and credibility
- o Use partners' leaders/staff to operate your programs

- Agree on the project
  - o Work w/people in early stages so you get a project everyone likes
  - o Be willing to do things differently - 'go gonzo'

Types of partnerships:

- Ask current volunteers/partners who should be involved
- Keep local legislators/politicos informed and involved
- Identify current community groups
  - o Churches – faith based groups
  - o Community oversight councils
  - o Health centers